

The Arian Controversy

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cured to bring the debate to a close by restating the doctrine of the Holy Trinity in a form which he hoped would be unanimously approved. But this merely precipitated an open rupture. For Arius immediately rose and denounced Alexander for falling into the heresy of Sabellianism and reducing the Second Person in the Trinity to a mere manifestation of the First.

It is to be remembered that the doctrine of the Holy Trinity—difficult as it is even now, after centuries of discussion, to state in terms that are free from all equivocation—must have been far more difficult to state then, before the Arian controversy had, so to speak, crystallised the exact meaning of the terms employed. It seems quite clear, moreover, from what subsequently took place, that Alexander was no match for Arius in dialectical subtlety and that Arius found it easy to twist his chief's unskilful arguments and expressions into bearing an interpretation which Alexander had not intended. At any rate the inevitable result of the conference was that both sides parted in anger, and Arius continued as before to preach the doctrine that the Son of God was a creature. For this was the leading tenet of Arianism and the basis of the whole heresy, that the Son of God was a creature, the first of all creatures, it is true, and created before the angels and archangels, ineffably superior to all other creatures, yet still a creature and, as such, ineffably inferior to the Creator, God the Father Himself.

It does not fall within the scope of this book to discuss in detail the theological conceptions of Arius